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RICHARD BURTHOGGE, HIS LIFE AND HIS PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY.*

A. THE LIFE OF RICHARD BURTHOGGE.

THERE are not many sources for the life of Richard Burthogge. The meager accounts by his biographers are based for the most part on the short sketch of his life quoted anonymously by Anthony Wood in the *Athenae Oxonienses*.

Burthogge was born in Plymouth, England.¹ The dates of his life are not definitely known, but are usually given as 1638-94.² As Georges Lyon³ points out, however, the date of his death must have been later than 1694. It might be inferred from the fact that *Christianity a Revealed Mystery* was not published until 1702, that the date has been placed too early. This work, however, may have been posthumous. But the fact that *Of the Soul of the World*, a letter to Locke, is dated 1698, shows conclusively that the date of Burthogge's death must have been at least four years later than that given by his biographers.

* [The following is the Introduction to a new edition of Richard Burthogge's Philosophical Writings which will soon be issued from our press.—Ed.]

¹ Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, Vol. IV, p. 581. Georges Lyon, *L'idéalisme en Angleterre au XVIII. siècle*, p. 72.

² Leslie Stephen, *Dictionary of National Biography*. Georges Lyon, *loc. cit.* Ueberweg, *A History of Philosophy from Thales to the Present Time*, Vol. I, p. 365.

³ *Loc. cit.*

Of Burthogge's parents we are told only that his father was a gunner.⁴ And of his early life nothing is recorded but the fact that he received his early education at the Exeter Grammar School.² In 1654 he "became either a servitor or chorister of All-s. coll." He "took one degree in arts four years after, compleated it by determination as a member of Linc. coll."⁴ He then studied medicine at the University of Leyden and in 1662 "was decorated in physic."⁵ On his return to "his native country, [he] married, buried his wife, took to him a second wife who was a widow of the parish of Totness in Devonshire, on whose joynture he lives in Bowden near to that place, as he hath done above twenty years, practices physic, and by that and wiving he hath obtained a pretty foul estate. This person who always kept pace with the fanatics, temporiz'd with the papists in the reign of King James II and therefore was made a justice of peace for Devonshire, which office he kept under William III as being a favourer of fanatics. He is look'd upon as a person of considerable learning, and of no less pride and ambition."⁶ The biographer is here quite evidently not free from personal feeling in sketching the facts of Burthogge's life. It is possible that he speaks with just scorn of Burthogge as one who diplomatically "kept pace with the fanatics," and at the same time "temporiz'd with the papists." Since, however, he furnishes no evidence, it is more reasonable to suppose that what he looked upon as diplomacy in Burthogge was only evidence of more advanced religious views. Religion in England in the seventeenth century was still dominated by tradition and dogma, and men of liberal religious views were rare.

In the years following his course at Leyden Burthogge was apparently finding time, aside from his professional duties, for philosophic reading and writing. Between the

⁴ Anthony Wood, *loc. cit.* Cf. Georges Lyon, *loc. cit.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

years 1671 and 1702 he published some eight or nine religious essays and three philosophical works. Of his philosophical writings the *Organum Vetus & Novum* appeared in 1678, the *Essay on Reason, and the Nature of Spirits* in 1694, and *Of the Soul of the World* in 1699.

B. BURTHOGGE'S PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY.⁶

Burthogge is one of those individuals, appearing now and again in history, whose merit is unrecognized in his own day not only because his teaching is premature, but also because it is so pervaded by the dominating thought of the time that its element of originality is lost. As a philosopher Burthogge cannot be placed either with the idealists of his own time nor with those of the following century. He holds a unique place between the two. All his writings bear in some measure the stamp of the Platonic idealism of the seventeenth century. His most significant teaching, however, is more closely allied to the idealistic philosophy of the eighteenth century. But for its Lockian strain of sensationalism his theory of knowledge is essentially that of Kant.

1. *Burthogge's Relation to the Cambridge Platonists.*

The influence of the Cambridge Platonists is obtrusively evident in Burthogge's writings. His method, except in the *Organum* and in the *Essay*, is the same uncritical method of the Platonists. His theological works are full of the eloquent exhortations,⁷ and long quotations from the Bible⁸ and classics⁹ which make the writings of Cudworth,¹⁰

⁶ Ueberweg alone, of the writers of the history of philosophy, makes mention of Burthogge in a single short paragraph.

⁷ See *Christianity a Revealed Mystery* and *A Brief Discourse concerning Perseverance in Grace*.

⁸ *Of the Soul of the World*, pp. 21-24; *Christianity a Revealed Mystery*, pp. 26ff; *Causa Dei*, p. 43. The page references, throughout, are to the original editions. The writer is indebted to the Harvard University library for the use of its Burthogge texts.

⁹ *Of the Soul of the World*, pp. 11, 18, 24ff; ΤΑΤΑΘΟΝ; *Causa Dei*, pp. 250f, 256, 395, et al.

More¹⁰ and Culverwel¹⁰ the most tedious of reading. And again, with the exception of the two works mentioned above, Burthogge's writings like those of the Platonists, are drenched with the theological views of the time.¹¹ And even the *Organum* and the *Essay* do not escape the religious bias of the seventeenth century.¹² But more specifically, Burthogge holds in common with the Cambridge Platonists at least two of their important tenets. His doctrine of the superiority of mind over matter is, with unimportant differences, the same as that taught by More and by Cudworth. And one of his doctrines of truth is in agreement with that of the Platonists, although he has a second teaching about truth which contradicts his own first doctrine as well as that of the Cambridge Platonists.

More and Cudworth, basing their teaching on Plato's *Timaeus*, held that not man alone, but nature as well, is dominated by a soul. They did not identify the soul of the world with God himself, but conceived it as an instrument in God's hands, made and used by him to manifest himself in the world.¹³ Burthogge, on the other hand, seems to identify the "Mosaical Spirit" with the Spirit of God¹⁴ diffused throughout the world, although he holds at the same time, that God is "Pure Mind," independent of all matter.¹⁴ Burthogge's teaching also about the nature of the human soul is essentially that of the Platonists. More and Cudworth held that particular souls, i. e., souls of men and animals and even of plants, are "sprigs of the common soul of the world, but not the soul itself,"¹⁵ though

¹⁰ See Cudworth, *True Intellectual System*; More, *Antidote against Atheism*; Culverwel, *Discourse of the Light of Nature*.

¹¹ See *Causa Dei*; TATAΘON; *Christianity a Revealed Mystery*.

¹² *Organum*, Sect. 41; *Essay*, Ch. VII.

¹³ Cudworth, *True Intellectual System*, edition of 1678, p. 150; More, *Antidote against Atheism*, Bk. II, Ch. II, paragr. 7.

¹⁴ *Essay*, Ch. II, Sect. 2, p. 44.

¹⁵ More, *Antidote against Atheism*, Appendix, Chap. II, paragr. 9; cf. *Immortality of the Soul*, Lib. III, Cap. 11-12, and Cudworth, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

it is unreasonable, Cudworth adds, to suppose that every plant and blade of grass has "a Particular Plastick Life." Similarly Burthogge call the soul "a certain Determinate Vital Energy....a certain Portion of the Spirit of the Universe Vested in a Body...."¹⁶

Again, in teaching that by intuition truth is attained, Burthogge is in agreement with the thought of his time. To the Platonists truth always meant religious truth, which is known, they believed, by intuition. The more completely a man can withdraw from the outer sensuous world into the realm of his own soul, the more certain is he of attaining a knowledge of truth.¹⁷ And Burthogge likewise teaches that apart from all sensuous experience we know the form of truth, which we apply on the occasion of sense-experience, thereby determining whether it be truth or not.¹⁸ Burthogge, however, holds an empirical theory of truth which contradicts this view. The criterion of truth, according to this second theory is based not on intuition, but rather on the objective harmony of things among themselves. Truth is not necessarily that which we "clearly and distinctly" apprehend,¹⁹ nor that which is in accord with our faculties,²⁰ but that which fits in with the whole objective scheme of things.²¹

2. *Burthogge's Relation to Locke and to Kant.*

In spite of the abundant evidence in all Burthogge's writings of the influence of seventeenth-century thought, it is true that his theory of knowledge, his most important

¹⁶ *Essay*, Ch. IV, Sect. 3, p. 150. Cf. *Of the Soul of the World*, p. 6; "...particular souls....are portions of that Spirit [Mosaical Spirit] acting in the several particular Bodies in which they are."

¹⁷ Smith, *Discourse concerning...Divine Knowledge*, Sect. 1. Culverwel, *Discourse of the Light of Nature*, especially Chaps. IX and XI.

¹⁸ *Organum*, Sects. 63, 69.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Sects. 18, 68, 69.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Sects. 7, 72.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Sects. 75, 78. Cf. Sect. 16.

philosophical teaching, remains singularly free from Platonist influence. It will be noted that in the *Organum* there are scattered passages²² in which Burthogge clings to the Platonic epistemology, holding sense to be the arch-enemy of the highest knowledge. But these occasional passages, inconsistent as they are with his usual teaching, form no integral part of Burthogge's doctrine of knowledge, which stands, untouched by Platonist influence, as a remarkable anticipation of Kant.

Far from holding that sense is a hindrance to knowledge, Burthogge teaches, like Kant, that it is one of the only two sources of knowledge. The essentials of Kant's epistemology are found in the well-known words: "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. . . . The understanding cannot see, the senses cannot think. By their union alone can knowledge be produced."²³ And this is exactly Burthogge's teaching: "The Understanding converses not with things ordinarily but by the Intervention of the sense."²⁴

Sensation, according to both Burthogge and Kant, is the passively received in knowledge, that which is given in experience:²⁵ "...the impressions of things without upon the Sensories produce or occasion in them the Cogitations which we call Sentiments, as Colours, Sounds, Savour &c."²⁶ And as objects can be perceived only through sensation, so, Burthogge teaches like Kant, they can be thought only through concepts or "notions." The mind knows nothing, he says, apart from its particular "manner of conceiving things." "The Understanding conceives not anything but under the notion of an Entity, and this either

²² Sects. 30, 32, 34, 35, 50.

²³ *Critique of Pure Reason*, A (1st ed.), p. 51; B, p. 75.

²⁴ *Essay*, Ch. III, Sect. 1, p. 60.

²⁵ *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 51; B 75.

²⁶ *Organum*, Sects. 24, 74.

a Substance or an Accident; under that of a whole or a part: or of a Cause, or of an effect or the like.”²⁷ And again Burthogge is in agreement with Kant in his most important teaching that in order to have knowledge of the object the percept and the concept must unite. Neither alone is sufficient to give complete knowledge.²⁸

The parallelism between Burthogge and Kant may be carried further. Burthogge holds not only that the object of knowledge involves both the sensational and the notional factor, but, like Kant, he teaches that it has no existence independent of thought.²⁹ Both teach that the object of knowledge is phenomenal, not real. That the sensuous content of knowledge has no objective existence was not an absolutely new doctrine even in Burthogge’s time. Locke, like Descartes, had already taught the ideality of the “secondary” sense-qualities. But that the mind itself, independent of sense-experience, actively contributes to the make-up of its own object is a doctrine which, according to the usual view, was promulgated for the first time by Kant. Yet in the light of the teaching of the *Organum* and the *Essay* it is clear that Kant’s own “Copernican revolution” had an instigator at least a century older than Kant.

To hold, however, as Professor Lovejoy holds,³⁰ that Kant’s theory was the common property of the Cambridge Platonists seems hardly justifiable even in the light of the quotations given in support of this belief. What these quotations from Cudworth and More show is rather the tenacious belief in the superiority of mind over matter, and thus in the superiority of thought (in which matter

²⁷ *Essay*, Ch. III, Sect. 1, p. 57. Cf. *Organum*, Sects. 14-15.

²⁸ *Organum*, Sects. 9-10. Cf. *Essay*, Ch. III, Sect. 1, p. 59; *Critique*, A 50. 100, 109, 116; B 74, 146.

²⁹ *Essay*, Ch. III, Sect. 1; *Organum*, Sects. 8-13.

³⁰ *Essays Philosophical and Psychological in Honor of Wm. James*, pp. 272-278.

is subservient to mind) over sensation (in which the mind is affected by matter). Nothing was more abhorrent to the Platonists than the idea that matter could in any way *assist* mind. The passage quoted from Cudworth³¹ is, by his own confession, simply an outburst against the "atheistic argument" that since matter exists in its own right without need of any creative mind, our knowledge of things depends merely upon "passive receptivity." This teaching was an outrage to the Platonists merely because it belittled the mind, making it appear of so much less importance than matter, and not because it ignored the necessary conceptual element in knowledge as taught by Kant and Burthogge. "But sensible things themselves. . . .," says Cudworth,³² "are not known and understood either by the passion or fancy of sense, nor by anything merely foreign and adventitious, but by intelligible ideas exerted from the mind itself, that is, by something native and domestic to it." These words of the quotation, italicized by Professor Lovejoy³³ to emphasize their agreement with the Kantian teaching, seem rather to show plainly that Cudworth is simply falling back on the familiar "innate ideas" theory in order to prove to the atheist that the mind is quite capable of getting on without any assistance from matter; that it would, in fact, fare much better could it be rid of sensuous perception altogether.

Burthogge, like Kant, falls short of idealism. He could not escape the influence of the traditional dualism of the seventeenth century any more than Kant could shake off the influence of Wolff's dualistic teaching.³⁴ Neither Burthogge nor Kant ever denied the existence of reality external to mind. But since they find that the object of

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 272-74.

³² *True Intellectual System*, *op. cit.*, p. 731.

³³ *Essays. . . in Honor of Wm. James*, pp. 273f.

³⁴ See M. W. Calkins, *The Persistent Problems of Philosophy*, p. 236.

knowledge has no independent existence, they are forced to hold that reality, conceived as the thing independent of consciousness, is unknown. This teaching about the unknown thing is emphasized by Burthogge in both the *Organum*³⁵ and the *Essay on Reason*³⁶. And Kant includes it not only in the section on the "Antinomies"³⁷ in the "Dialectic," but anticipates it in all the other divisions of the *Critique*;³⁸ in the chapter on "Phenomena and Noumena"³⁹ of the "Analytic," and in the "Æsthetic."⁴⁰

Burthogge's teaching about the nature of the thing is essentially the same as that of Kant. The "thing" is, in the first place, unlike the "object," non-mental and wholly independent of thought.⁴¹ In the second place, the thing really exists. The object, Burthogge teaches with Kant, is only appearance or phenomenon, without reality.⁴¹ And finally the thing, for Burthogge as well as for Kant, is unknown.⁴¹ Thus does Burthogge, like Kant, unquestioningly and tenaciously hold to an external reality, a reality robbed, however, of all positive character save that of existence.

There is in Burthogge no explicit proof for the existence of the thing. That there exists independent reality was not questioned in the seventeenth century. And Burthogge, like his contemporaries, takes the "thing" for granted though he suggests the argument, later used by Kant, for the existence of it. Our sensations, he says, must have a cause; we know that we ourselves do not cause them; they must therefore have an external cause.⁴²

³⁵ Sect. 9.

³⁶ Ch. III, Sect. 2, pp. 71, 73.

³⁷ A 357, 359, 361, 368, 378.

³⁸ See M. W. Calkins, *op. cit.*, p. 237, footnote.

³⁹ A 250, 253, 258; B 300, 303.

⁴⁰ A 24, 42, 44f, 49; B 38, 59, 61f, 67.

⁴¹ *Organum*, Sects. 9-10.

⁴² *Essay*, Ch. III, Sect. 2, p. 73, cf. pp. 74f.

Kant several times in the *Critique* implies this causal relation between the phenomenon and the thing.⁴³ "The understanding," he says, "...forms the thought of an object by itself, but as transcendental only, which is cause of phenomena."⁴⁴ This doctrine is formulated even more explicitly in the *Prolegomena*: "I grant...that there are bodies without us, that is, things which, though quite unknown to us as to what they are in themselves, we yet know by the representations which their influence on our sensibility procures us."⁴⁵ That the thing or reality is unknown seems, however, to Burthogge to require no proof. On the basis (1) of his view that external reality unquestionably exists, and (2) of his previous teaching that the object of knowledge has no independent existence, it follows inevitably that the external reality is unknown. If what is known is not external and if such external reality nevertheless exists, it follows that this reality must be unknown.⁴⁶

The agreement of Burthogge's teaching with that of Kant is not complete. Marked as the likeness is between the two, Burthogge's epistemology seems to diverge from the Kantian at one important point. Along with his teaching that the mind independent of all external impression actively contributes part of its own object, Burthogge at the same time holds a sensationalistic doctrine. While agreeing with Kant in teaching that the notional factor is subjective in source, Burthogge seems to deny to the notion any *a priori* validity by holding, like Locke, that sense-impressions enter the mind directly, independent of *a priori* subjective conditions. "The senses," says Locke,

⁴³ A 252, 288; B 344.

⁴⁴ A 288, B 344.

⁴⁵ Sect. 13, Remark II. Cf. M. W. Calkins, *op. cit.*, p. 240, footnote.

⁴⁶ For Kant's arguments in defense of the view that external reality must be unknown, see *Critique*, A 128f, 244, 378.

"at first let in particular ideas, and furnish the yet empty cabinet."⁴⁷ And again: "Let us suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished?... To this I answer in one word, from experience."⁴⁸ And there are passages in Burthogge which give the same sensationalistic account of the origin of our knowledge: "...the impressions of things without upon the Sensories," he says, "produce or occasion in them the Cogitations which we call Sentiments, as Colours, Sounds, Sapours &c. And Sentiments (again) impressing... the Minde and understanding, beget or occasion in it those higher Cogitations which we call Notions, Apprehensions of Reason or Ideas...."⁴⁹ This agreement of Burthogge's teaching with that of Locke, and the added fact that Burthogge's *Essay upon Reason*, dedicated⁵⁰ "To the Learned Mr. John Lock, Author of the Essay upon Humane Understanding," appeared four years after Locke's *Essay*, would suggest that Burthogge borrowed from Locke. A further consideration, however, proves the suspicion unwarranted. The *Organum* in which Burthogge's complete doctrine of knowledge is given, was published twelve years before Locke's *Essay*. Moreover, it will be noted that of Burthogge's two works the later shows less evidence of agreement with the Lockian teaching than the earlier. It is true that Burthogge insists in the *Essay*⁵¹ as in the *Organum*,⁵² that all knowledge comes through sense-experience. But the point of emphasis has been shifted in the later work. In the *Organum* Burthogge, like Locke, lays stress upon the fact that sense is the fundamental source of knowledge from which the notional is

⁴⁷ *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. I, Ch. II, par. 15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Bk. II, Ch. I, par. 2.

⁴⁹ *Organum*, Sect. 24.

⁵⁰ Preface, p. [1].

⁵¹ Ch. III, Sect. 1, pp. 57, 59f, 62; Sect. 2, pp. 70, 74; Ch. IV, Sect. 1, p. 80, Sect. 2, p. 92; Ch. IV [VI], Sect. 2, p. 138.

⁵² Sects. 9, 24, 26, 27, 32, 74^a, 92.

derived. In the *Essay*, on the other hand, Burthogge seems no longer chiefly concerned in showing that all knowledge begins with sense-experience but rather, like Kant,⁵³ in emphasizing the fact that since all knowledge comes through sense the object of knowledge must be phenomenal, not real.⁵⁴

But granting that Burthogge seems to combine inconsistently a quasi-Kantian category doctrine with a Lockian sensationalism, the apparent inconsistency is not impossible of explanation. The explanation lies in two facts: in the first place, Burthogge does not include in his teaching an important part of the Kantian doctrine; and in the second place, his sensationalism is not of the thoroughgoing Lockian type. Burthogge never attributes, as Kant does, *a priori* validity to notions. While holding that notions are subjective and that they actively contribute to the make-up of the object, he never positively admits the Kantian teaching that these notions constitute the *a priori* condition under which alone sense-experience is possible. And, on the other hand, Burthogge does not hold with Locke, that sense-impressions enter the "empty cabinet" unaccompanied. Burthogge's teaching seems to be rather that, though sense-impressions are the beginning of knowledge, they never appear in the mind unaccompanied. Upon the occasion of sense-experience there are inevitably aroused in the mind certain notions. These notions are not derived from sense, but, lying dormant in the mind, are made operative upon the occasion of sense-experience. In other words, Burthogge holds neither the Kantian view that notions are the necessary condition for sense-experience, nor the Lockian view that they are merely an outgrowth from sense-experience. He seems to hold rather, that they are

⁵³ *Critique*, A 104.

⁵⁴ Cf. Burthogge on the advantage of knowing that the object of knowledge is phenomenal (*Essay*, Ch. III, Sect. 2, pp. 68-69) with Kant (*Critique*, 2d ed., Pref., p. xxi) and Locke (*Essay*, Bk. I, Ch. I, pars. 4-6).

the inevitable accompaniment of sense-experience, giving to it meaning.

But this reconciliation between Burthogge's sensationism and his doctrine of subjective notions leaves still unexplained another apparent inconsistency in his teaching. The form of *apriorism* against which Burthogge argues is the same widespread "innate ideas" theory of the seventeenth century, later attacked by Locke.⁵⁵ In spite of this denial of original ideas independent of sensation ("Con-natural and Ingrafted Notions; Principles designedly implanted in the Minde, to be a rule to it. . . ."⁵⁶) Burthogge apparently admits, in the *Organum*, the validity of intuition in judgments of truth and falsity. This teaching seems to be directly opposed not only to his epistemological sensationism, but also to his teaching that the criterion of truth is empirical. Burthogge indeed asserts both that the "form" or "notion" of truth must be known beforehand,⁵⁷ i. e., independent of sense-experience, in order that it may be applied as the test of truth when the object is presented sensuously, and (in apparent contradiction) that truth is *external* harmony, something in the object⁵⁸ which is perceived empirically only.

These two teachings about the criteria of truth certainly seem to be diametrically opposed, and yet it is possible once more to interpret Burthogge's meaning in such a way as to reconcile his intuitionism with his empiricism. If the account of Burthogge's epistemology as an intermediate form between the Kantian category doctrine and the Lockian sensationism is correct, we need only apply this interpretation to his teaching about truth in order to explain the apparent inconsistency. In other words,

⁵⁵ *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. I.

⁵⁶ *Organum*, Sect. 73.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Sects. 63, 64, 69, 74¹.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Sects. 68, 69, 72, 74², 83, 84.

Burthogge's empirical criterion of truth can be reconciled with his intuitionism in much the same way in which his sensationalism was reconciled with his doctrine of subjective notions. Burthogge apparently means that the "form" or "notion" of truth, like all other notions is an actual part of the object, but that it is a part contributed by the mind. According to this view, although the mind alone contributes the notion of truth, it does so only on the occasion of sense-experience. The mind never even becomes aware of its possession of the "notion" of truth, until the sensuous percept provides the opportunity for the application of the notion.

If, then, it be held that Kant's chief contribution to philosophy is the theory of the possibility of *a priori* knowledge through concepts, it must be admitted that Burthogge falls short of Kantian epistemology at the crucial point. But if Kant's most important teaching is rather the denial of the possibility of categories transcending possible experience, then it must be conceded that Burthogge, in spite of his sensationalism, does anticipate the Kantian teaching. It is true that Kant's "Copernican revolution" is incomplete without both sides of his teaching. But of the two, the teaching of the *a priori* character of the categories seems less important than his teaching of their limitation of application to possible experience.

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